

Puzzles (was: another topic)

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 12 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1262>

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Kevin J. Maroney — 12 Mar 2001, 14:44

At 08:41 AM 3/12/01 -0800, Dan'I wrote:

Perhaps that was precisely the purpose? Not suggesting that Wolfe is writing for/at this list (though I can think of at least one case of an extraordinarily talented musician doing the analogous thing, writing a song directed obliquely at an online fan group); but that Wolfe deliberately might write a Rorschach blot of a book, intentionally setting it up so that what you find in it depends even more than usual on what you bring to it.

I was just discussing this with a friend on Friday. One might posit that there is a genre of "puzzling fiction"--fiction where much or all of the meaning is hidden behind misdirections, puns, jokes, allusions, omissions, and so forth. One of the obvious masters of this, and one of Wolfe's clear antecedents, is Nabokov.

It is clear that Wolfe enjoys writing in this genre. In fact, he writes in this genre even more consistently than he writes in speculative fiction; _Peace_ and _Pandora_, by Holly Hollander_ are both "puzzle fiction" but are at most only loosely speculative fiction.

I don't know why Wolfe is so fond of puzzle fiction. Based on some of his writings and speeches about his work, I know that he thinks that there is a particular joy in piecing together meaning for themselves. I also know that he enjoys writing for an audience which enjoys that aspect of his work.

I know that I enjoy puzzling through his books. I also know that there are puzzles in them that I haven't solved.

Unlike the person who started this thread, I think that all of the **important** aspects of the narrative of both _The Book of the Long Sun_ and _The Book of the Short Sun_ are both very clear. There are many puzzles which remain and which can be chewed for a long time, but the main narrative is much more straightforward in both of these works than in, say, _The Book of the New Sun_.

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*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.